



## Request for Proposals: Advancing Oral Health Equity

Oral health is critical to overall health and well-being, yet it is often overlooked in broader health and healthcare conversations. Poor oral health is linked to diabetes, heart disease, respiratory illness, poor nutrition, and reduced quality of life. In alignment with its 2026 strategic plan, HealthPath Foundation of Ohio (HealthPath) is launching a new grant opportunity to advance oral health equity, building on its long-standing commitment to expanding access, strengthening prevention, and supporting integrated medical and dental care in Ohio through approximately \$8.9 million in oral health grants awarded over the past 25 years.

This RFP aligns with [Oral Health Ohio's](#) (OHO) vision of optimal oral and overall health for all Ohioans, and complements [Ohio Department of Health's Oral Health Program](#), which leads statewide efforts in oral health surveillance, prevention, and workforce development. OHO plays a key role in advancing policy, engaging stakeholders, and promoting collaboration across sectors.

Despite progress in expanding oral health access, significant gaps remain. Older adults and individuals with disabilities face barriers to affordable, comprehensive oral health care, including provider shortages, transportation challenges, and limited access to preventive services. These challenges are particularly pronounced in rural and Appalachian counties, many of which are designated Dental Health Professional Shortage Areas (DHPSAs), where emergency department visits for preventable dental conditions are high and safety-net dental clinics are limited. Medicaid beneficiaries, uninsured individuals, and those with mobility or cognitive impairments are particularly affected. To underscore the need for this funding opportunity, the following data highlight oral health challenges faced by older adults and individuals with disabilities in Ohio:

- Traditional Medicare does not include dental benefits, leaving many older Ohioans without dental insurance.
- Adults with disabilities in Ohio are three times more likely to have unmet dental needs. This is exacerbated by poverty, isolation, and limited access to care.
- Nearly 1 in 7 Ohio adults aged 65+ have lost all their natural teeth due to decay or gum disease.
- Only 43% of older adults in Ohio reported receiving preventive dental care in the past year.
- Many rural and Appalachian counties in Ohio are federally designated as whole-county Dental Health Professional Shortage Areas (DHPSAs).

## **The Opportunity**

Building on the strengths of communities and organizations serving older adults (60 and older) and individuals with disabilities, HealthPath will award two-year grants of up to \$50,000 to nonprofit and safety-net health organizations in fourteen counties to expand and enhance oral health equity. A total of up to \$250,000 in funding will be awarded through this RFP.

## **Funding Priorities**

HealthPath seeks to support organizations addressing oral health inequities for older adults (60 and older) and individuals with disabilities through community-based programs, education, outreach, advocacy, and service delivery. Funded initiatives may include, but are not limited to:

### **Oral Health Integration**

Integrating oral health into broader health and social service systems to improve coordination, continuity, and outcomes:

- Partner with primary care providers to include oral health screenings and referrals during medical visits.
- Integrate oral health assessments into chronic disease management programs (e.g., diabetes, heart disease).
- Collaborate with home health agencies and long-term care facilities to include oral hygiene in care plans.
- Train and support medical providers to apply Silver Diamine Fluoride (SDF) for non-invasive treatment of tooth decay.

### **Cross-Sector Collaboration**

Strengthening partnerships across health, social service, and community organizations:

- Develop and improve referral pathways and care coordination between dental providers and aging/disability service organizations.
- Partner with hospitals, federally qualified health centers (FQHCs), and care coordinators to co-manage patients with oral health needs.
- Engage community health workers to provide oral health education and navigation support.

### **Data-Driven Approaches**

Using data to inform programs and improve outcomes:

- Collect and share oral health data with health systems and community partners.
- Identify gaps in care and coordinate responses across sectors.
- Align oral health efforts with local health improvement plans and coalitions.
- Track patient outcomes, including preventive care utilization and reductions in oral health-related complications (e.g., dental-related ED visits, aspiration pneumonia).

## **Expanding Access to Care**

Delivering services where they are most needed:

- Operate mobile, portable, or pop-up dental clinics in rural or high-need areas.
- Provide home-based dental services for individuals with mobility limitations.
- Offer dental screenings and preventive care at senior centers or disability service hubs.

## **Provider Training and Support**

Equip providers and community organizations to serve older adults and individuals with disabilities:

- Offer continuing education for non-dental providers on oral health prevention and minimally invasive care (SDF, Interim Therapeutic Restoration).
- Train dental teams in trauma-informed care and communication strategies for patients with cognitive, sensory, or physical disabilities.
- Educate nonprofits, caregivers, and medical providers serving victims of elder abuse about the oral health impacts of abuse.

## **Safety Net Infrastructure**

Strengthening local capacity to deliver care:

- Establish or expand safety net dental clinics in underserved counties.
- Support shared-use agreements to open dental facilities to community use.
- Equip clinics with adaptive tools and technologies to serve patients with disabilities.

## **Dual-Eligible Supports**

Addressing the needs of individuals enrolled in both Medicaid and Medicare:

- Provide benefit navigation assistance to help dual-eligible individuals understand and utilize oral health coverage.
- Train providers on billing and reimbursement processes for dual-eligible patients.
- Support practices in credentialing with Medicaid and Medicare Advantage Plans to expand service availability.
- Pilot innovative care models that align with value-based care and improve outcomes for dual-eligible populations.
- Conduct community assessments to identify gaps in access and advocate for policies that improve provider participation and reimbursement rates.

## Desired Outputs and Outcomes

Through this RFP, HealthPath aims to achieve measurable improvements in oral health equity for older adults and individuals with disabilities:

### Increased Access to Preventive Care

- Number of older adults and/or individuals with disabilities receiving preventive dental services.
- Increased number of dental visits compared to baseline in target counties.
- Earlier detection of oral health concerns leading to timely referrals and follow-up care, reducing the need for emergency or restorative services.

### Reduced Emergency Department Visits

- Number of patients redirected to community-based preventive or restorative care.
- Reduction in ED visits for preventable oral health conditions.
- Improved connection to appropriate, ongoing dental care following emergency encounters.

### Improved Affordability and Availability of Services

- Number of patients served through mobile or safety-net clinics.
- Reduced financial barriers to dental care for older adults and individuals with disabilities.
- Increased availability of dental services in underserved and high-need communities.

### Expanded Integration into Health and Social Services

- Number of patients referred to dental care through integrated programs.
- Improved coordination between dental, medical, and social service providers.
- Increased identification of oral health needs within non-dental service settings.

### Strengthened Provider Capacity

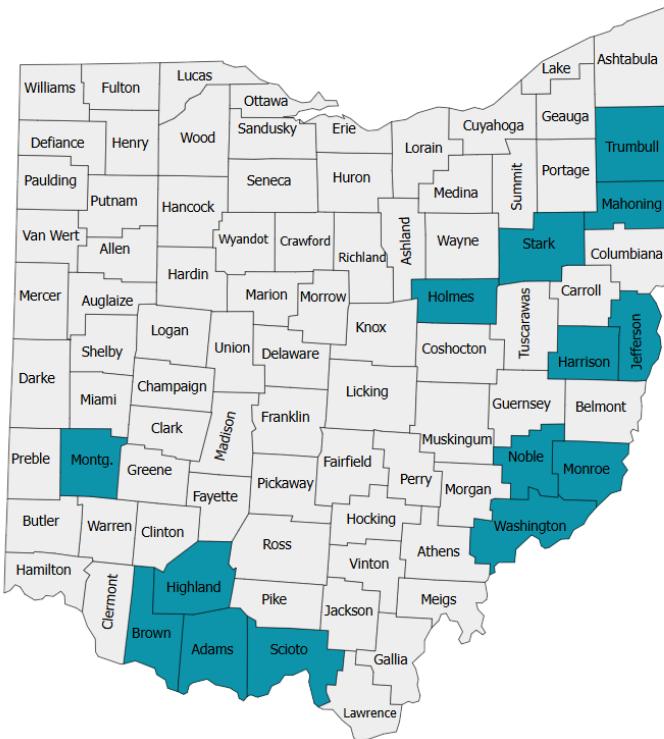
- Number of clinics equipped with adaptive or accessible dental equipment.
- Increased provider readiness to serve older adults and individuals with disabilities.
- Improved accessibility and accommodation within dental clinic environments.

### Enhanced Community Partnerships and Infrastructure

- Number of collaborative initiatives implemented to address oral health disparities.
- Stronger local networks supporting coordinated oral health service delivery.
- Increased sustainability of community-based oral health initiatives beyond the grant period.

## Counties of Focus

Through this RFP, HealthPath will prioritize organizations serving residents in fourteen Ohio counties: **Adams, Brown, Harrison, Highland, Holmes, Jefferson, Mahoning, Monroe, Montgomery, Noble, Scioto, Stark, Trumbull, and Washington**. These counties represent a mix of rural, Appalachian, and urban communities with documented disparities in oral health access and outcomes.



## Populations of Focus

Through this RFP, HealthPath will prioritize initiatives serving older adults (60 and older) and individuals with disabilities. The [State Oral Health Plan](#) identifies these populations as experiencing significant oral health disparities, including poor oral health outcomes, limited access to providers, transportation challenges, and inadequate insurance coverage.

## Eligibility

To qualify for a grant under this RFP, organizations must:

- Be an Ohio-based 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization serving one or more of the 14 counties of focus.
- Demonstrate alignment with the funding priorities, populations, and counties of focus outlined in the RFP.
- Requests for funding to support capital campaigns, healthcare levies, lobbying or political campaigns, emergency needs, scholarships, endowments, or grants to individuals will not be considered.
- Organizations without 501(c)(3) status may be eligible to apply through a fiscal sponsor. Fiscal sponsorships will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis. Groups interested in this option should contact HealthPath before applying to ensure eligibility.
- Organizations with an active HealthPath grant are ineligible to apply for additional funding until their current grant period concludes.

## Evaluation Criteria

Proposals will be assessed based on the following:

- **Eligibility and alignment:** The organization meets all eligibility requirements and aligns with HealthPath's priorities and vision.
- **Mission and impact:** The proposal clearly outlines the organization's mission, goals of the proposed activities, and has clear metrics and measures to evaluate and demonstrate impact.
- **Community-centered approach:** The organization actively involves community members in designing, implementing, and evaluating programs to ensure relevance and effectiveness, incorporates cultural competencies, and addresses health disparities using a health equity lens. \*
- **Collaboration and partnerships:** The proposal demonstrates meaningful collaboration with other organizations, stakeholders, or community groups to enhance program reach, effectiveness, and sustainability.
- **Root cause approach:** The proposal demonstrates an understanding of the underlying causes of oral health disparities in the target population and outlines strategies that address these root causes rather than only treating immediate needs.
- **Data-informed approach:** The organization leverages qualitative and quantitative data in developing solutions and evaluating program effectiveness and impact.

- **Organizational capacity:** The organization includes relevant staff expertise, experience, infrastructure, and any previous success with similar initiatives to support their implementation of the proposed project.
- **Sustainability, potential risks, and mitigation strategies:** The organization describes reasonable approaches to sustain the project beyond the grant period and addresses potential risks with mitigation strategies.

*\*Applying a health equity lens means considering health disparities and social determinants of health in all aspects of the work, from problem analysis to solution implementation and measuring success. It requires addressing structural inequities and the root causes of disparities.*

## Application Deadline & Process

Proposals must be submitted through HealthPath's [online grants management system](#) by **March 9<sup>th</sup> at 11:59 p.m. EST**. For more information, visit our [FAQs](#).

Award notifications will be issued by May 29, 2026, and grant payments are expected to begin in June. Organizations receiving funding may be invited to take part in the 2026 Oral Health Symposium on **Friday, October 23**, in Columbus, Ohio.

**For New Users/Applicants:** Please click "Create New Account" to complete the registration process and create your login credentials.

**For Existing Users/Applicants:** Please enter your credentials and log in. If you forgot your password, please use the "Forgot your Password?" link to the left to reset your password.

**Not Sure?** If you believe your organization has a profile but are unsure of the login credentials, do not create a new organization profile. Contact our Grants Manager with your organization's name and tax ID number (EIN) to receive your username and password.

## Contact Information

For technical questions concerning eligibility or the online application process, contact Abby Haynes, Grants Manager, at [Abby.Haynes@healthpathohio.org](mailto:Abby.Haynes@healthpathohio.org). For program-related questions, contact Tiffany LaCour, Senior Program Officer, at [Tiffany.LaCour@healthpathohio.org](mailto:Tiffany.LaCour@healthpathohio.org).

## Supporting Documentation and Resources

[Oral Health Ohio. "2023-2027 State Oral Health Plan." Feb. 2023.](#)

[Ohio Department of Health. Safety Net Dental Clinics and Dental HPSAs\\* in Ohio.](#)

[Ohio Department of Health, Oral Health in Ohio Presentation \(2024\)](#)